

27th Annual Heritage Ball

“Historical Contribution to the Arts and Humanities”

“Historical Contributions to the Arts and Humanities” provides us with the physical, emotional, and spiritual tools that are necessary in our continual efforts to reclaim, appreciate, and share our rich cultural heritage. It is only through conscious investment in the arts and humanities that we are able to perpetuate the spirit of community and achievement for generations to come.

On Saturday evening, February 11, 2006, the Black Heritage Society will hold its Annual Heritage Ball. In keeping with this year’s theme, “Historical Contributions to the Arts and Humanities,” the Society will honor a group of outstanding individuals and organizations for their contributions in the Arts and Humanities. We invite you to join us and other Rhode Islanders, as we celebrate the work of these leaders and innovators in their fields.

Barbara Meek

The Fifth Annual

Edward and Christiana Banister History Makers Award

Barbara Meek’s legacy within Rhode Island’s theatre scene is forever established! For over 35 years, she has been an active member of Providence’s Trinity Repertory Company and a valuable contributor to the Rhode Island community at large.

Born in Detroit to a bus driver and pianist turned hairstylist, Ms. Meek attended Wayne State University’s prestigious graduate school of Theatre before embarking on an impressive film, television, and theatrical career now spanning three decades.

To date, Ms. Meek has appeared in more than 100 productions of Trinity Repertory Company while also maintaining a respectable presence in television. She is probably best known for her role as Ellen Granby on the television show *Archie Bunker’s Place*, a character she played for two seasons.

Ms. Meek has received many awards including The Pell Award for Excellence in the Arts, the Foundation for Repertory Theatre Award, the Wayne State University Arts Achievement Award in Theatre, an Honorary Doctor of Arts degree from the University of Rhode Island, and the Elliot Norton Award for Sustained Excellence.

Through her commitment to the arts, Meek’s artistic accomplishments and longevity have blazed new paths, embodied resilience, and deeply enhanced the lives of theatre lovers across the nation.

Viola Davis

Matilda 'Sissieretta' Jones Award
for the Humanities with a focus on Cultural Literacy in the Arts

A Tony Award winner for Best Featured Actress, Viola Davis was poised for success at an early age. Born in Rhode Island to parents who deeply believed in the value of education, she has built a remarkable stage and screen career and an exceptional background in theatre production.

An alumna of Rhode Island College and the Julliard School, Ms. Davis has performed with Trinity Repertory Company in productions such as “Meeting Joe Turner” as well as with the American Conservatory Theatre, and the Sundance Theatre Institute. Her exposure to national audiences includes appearances on *NYPD Blue*, *New York Undercover*, *Third Watch*, *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*, and *CSI* as well feature films such as *The Substance of Fire*.

Davis admits that she draws inspiration from researching and reading “about African Americans who have beat the odds.” In similar fashion, the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society salutes Ms. Davis’ vibrant career and overcoming spirit through presenting her with the Matilda ‘Sissieretta’ Jones Award for Humanities with a focus on Cultural Literacy in the Arts.

Ed Johnetta Fowler-Miller

Nancy Elizabeth Prophet Award for the Humanities

An award winning fiber artist, quilter, teacher, curator, and community activist, Ed Johnetta Fowler-Miller is heralded as one of the nation’s most creative and improvisational quilt-makers. Fowler-Miller’s artwork has traveled the world and resides in many noteworthy museums, and corporate and private collections including, the National Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. and the Nelson Mandela National Museum in Cape Town, South Africa - to highlight a few.

Fowler-Miller’s art interests began early in Rhode Island through her father who was in the cleaning industry and an aunt who was a quilter. She says of her journey that, “I have always had a passion for fabrics...I am also passionate about giving back to the community...I’ve found a way to combine my two passions, using textiles to help people grow, achieve, and come together.”

Fowler Miller is co-founder and Master Teaching Artist at the Hartford Artisan Center, which makes art accessible to all ages. Her talents and generosity have impacted the lives of senior citizens, youth, and celebrities – including Phylicia Rashad of the former hit series *The Cosby Show*. Her numerous awards include the State of Connecticut’s most prestigious artistic award, The Governor’s Art Award, and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum’s first President’s Award and, now, the Rhode Island Black Heritage’s Nancy Elizabeth Prophet Award for the Humanities.

Rhett Jones

George T. Downing Award for Education

Since 1972, Rhett Jones has been a valuable member of the RI community, but his scholarly contributions to the field of Africana research have been consistent for over four decades. Holding degrees from the University of Illinois, the University of Connecticut, The University of Wisconsin, and Brown University, Jones' academic journey is vast and his accomplishments immeasurable. Jones' expertise in African American history, Caribbean history, colonial American race relations, and African American theatre continue to make him a highly regarded consultant both on educational and editorial boards, in addition to community organizations; his publications consistently increase the quantity and deepen the quality of Africana scholarship-at-large.

A long time friend of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, Jones served as its Research Director for 11 years during which time he produced essential documentation on Rhode Island's African American history. These contributions range from the "Introduction" in The Black Regiment in the American Revolution to "Black Survival Strategies in the Americas before 1866" in Creative Survival: The Providence Black Community in the Nineteenth Century.

Currently as Professor of Africana Studies at Brown University, Jones has served as Director of its Afro-American Studies program, Director of its Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America, and since 1975, continues as Research Director of the University's Rites and Reason Theatre.

Jerry Lopes

Rev. Arthur L. Hardge Award for Labor and Enterprise

Jerry Lopes became one of the youngest news directors of a major radio network when he joined Sheridan Broadcasting Corporation in 1980. By 1990, he was overseeing Sheridan's corporate headquarters' network operations as Vice President of Programming and Operations. Through a strategic partnership between Sheridan and the National Black Network that led to the creation of American Urban Radio Networks, Mr. Lopes assumed his position as President of Programming Operations and Affiliations in 1993 where he oversees aspects of the largest Black-owned radio network company in the country.

A native of Providence, Mr. Lopes attended Johnson and Whales Jr. College and Boston University. During his New England tenure, he worked in Ocean State stations WBRU-FM, WICE-AM, and WJAR-AM as well as Boston stations WILD-AM and WHDU / WCOZ. With over three decades of expertise in broadcasting, millions of listeners have been well served by Mr. Lopes' prowess and programming which continues to preserve the voice and dignity of Black America.

The Providence Black Repertory Company
The Celebrity Club Legacy Award for Musical Innovation

The Celebrity Club Legacy Award for Musical Innovation is presented to the **Sounds Sessions Music Festival** produced by the Providence Black Repertory Company, in collaboration with the City of Providence Department of Art, Culture & Tourism. Sound Session Providence is a recipient of the prestigious NEA Jazz Masters award and has become a cornerstone of Providence's reputation as a vital cultural destination. Sounds Sessions '05 Music Festival reflected the dynamic vitality of integrative genres of music culture while acknowledging and epitomizing the acceptance of black entertainers to a great portion of the world.. Through reflecting a combination of cultures and styles, Sound Sessions celebrates artistic excellence that continues to challenge musical and social boundaries.

The Providence Black Repertory Company produces and presents artistic performances that bring people together, provoke thought, inspire hope, and create understanding. The Black Rep is an arts organization that provides a unique experience in the tradition of Black/African/African-American art forms and culture in three key areas: Theatre, Education, and Public Programs. The work mirrors the rich cultural heritage of the U.S. and creates a venue where universal stories can be shared among all. The Providence Black Repertory is located in the heart of the Arts / Cultural district on Westminster Street, downtown Providence.

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For ticket and additional information, contact us:
Rhode Island Black Heritage Society
The Arcade – Suite 29
65 Weybosset Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903
Tel: 401-751-3490.
E-mail: RIBlackHeritageSociety@verizon.net